

DPH Shares 'Preparedness Buddy' Brochure To Help Delawareans Prepare For Emergencies

DOVER – Winter weather can bring high winds, snow, ice, and extremely cold temperatures. Responding to those and other potential hazards – such as power outages, fires, floods, and disease outbreaks – is less stressful when emergency plans are in place. This is particularly true for adults and children with disabilities, seniors, and those with temporary or chronic health conditions, language barriers or any other issue that might make mobility difficult in an emergency. That's why the Division of Public Health (DPH) is encouraging use of the Office of Preparedness' "Preparedness Buddy Brochure."

This downloadable and printable brochure is a great tool that asks people with access and functional need to identify a Preparedness Buddy to help them prepare to manage through emergencies. It provides these individuals, as well as their support network or "buddy," with a step-by-step template for developing a personal emergency plan in the event of situations where they may need to evacuate their homes or shelter in place.

The Preparedness Buddy brochure can be found online at <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/php/preparednessbuddy.html> in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. DPH recommends printing the brochure, filling in such important information as medications you are taking, food and drug allergies, medical supplies and equipment, medical and personal caregivers or disability service providers, primary care physician, communication and mobility challenges, and your

specific transportation needs. If you have a pet or service animal, include their information and needs, and then share it with friends and family. DPH especially advises people with access and functional needs who live alone, to find a primary Preparedness Buddy, as well as an alternate buddy. They should also identify and send a copy of the brochure to an out-of-state Preparedness Buddy.

“Keeping all Delawareans safe is a priority of the Division of Public Health,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Most everyone has someone with access and functional needs in their family or friend network. By helping those who may need extra assistance prepare for emergencies, we are taking an important step towards doing just that. We strongly urge anyone with access and functional needs to take advantage of the Preparedness Buddy brochure as a precaution in case of an emergency.”

And, DPH urges loved ones or those serving people with access and functional needs to print and fill out the brochure if an individual is unable. The term “people with access and functional needs” is defined as those with hearing, mobility, cognitive, emotional, and mental challenges, and also can include older people, children, those with limited or no English language proficiency, persons from diverse cultures, individuals who use life-support systems, people who use service animals, and people who are medically or chemically dependent (meaning those who must regularly take medications or receive medical care or are struggling with substance abuse.)

DPH advises these seven steps for people with access and functional needs to plan for emergencies:

1. Find a Preparedness Buddy and an alternate buddy. Delawareans who live alone or have special needs should ask someone dependable to serve as their Preparedness Buddy and their alternate.

2. Complete the Preparedness Buddy personal emergency plan brochure. Keep the original plan on the refrigerator and a copy in a disaster kit. Ask your preparedness buddies to keep copies.

3. Include in the personal emergency plan what to do in case of interrupted utilities (electricity, gas, phone, and garbage disposal) and interrupted transportation (medication deliveries, transportation to and from work, and caregiver and family visits). Home health care clients should contact their providers to ask how bad weather impacts their schedule and ability to reach clients. Include contact names, street addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. Review and update emergency plans each year or during peak disaster seasons.

4. The Preparedness Buddy should regularly check in on their designated buddy to ensure they have enough medication, oxygen, medical supplies, food, and water.

5. Read the "Emergency Preparedness" section of the Guide to Services for Older Delawareans and Persons with Disabilities at <http://www.delawareadrc.com/>, pages 82-84.

6. Register Delawareans with access and functional needs at the [Smart 9-1-1 website](#). All three counties use Smart 9-1-1. Smart 9-1-1 is a service that allows residents to create a free Safety Profile for their household that includes any information they want 9-1-1 and first responders to have in the event of an emergency. When anyone in that household dials 9-1-1 from a phone associated with their Safety Profile, their profile is immediately displayed to the 9-1-1 call taker providing additional information that can be used to facilitate the proper response to the proper location.

7. Read the emergency planning instructions for your region:

- New Castle County Emergency Operations: 302-395-2700 or <http://nccde.org/154/Emergency-Management>

- Kent County Emergency Operations: 302-735-3465 or www.co.kent.de.us/public-safety/emergency-management.aspx
- Sussex County Emergency Operations: 302-855-7801 or www.sussexcountyde.gov/emergency-operations-center

The Office of Preparedness created the Preparedness Buddy brochure in collaboration with Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), the Developmental Disabilities Council, Autism Delaware, the University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies, Family SHADE, and local Emergency Operations Centers.

For more information on preparing for emergencies such as what items to keep in a disaster kit and evacuation planning visit:

- Preparedde.org – The State’s central site for emergency planning and preparedness, created jointly by DPH, DEMA, The Delaware Citizen’s Corps and the Delaware Medical Reserve Corps
- Allreadyde.org – the University of Delaware’s webpage for Emergency Readiness Planning for Delawareans with Disabilities
- Ready.Gov – FEMA’s planning site for Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs
- [The American Red Cross’s People With Disabilities planning page](#)

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person’s spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.